ELECTIONS
UNDER THE SHADOW OF IMPERIALIST WARS

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY ON THE 2008 U.S. ELECTIONS

CAPITALIST CRISIS CREATES MORE RACISM, WAR, REPRESSION, HARD TIMES

AND REVOLUTIONARY OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

Discredited abroad by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. imperialists (capitalists with investments and military forces abroad) are scrambling to get our support at home. A big voter turnout will strengthen their claim that they are the "democratic leadership of the world." In the name of the workers of the world, we must not help them put this scam over!

The new president will be commander-in-chief of the most active military in the world, whose bombs, invasions and blockades have killed hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of working class families over the past 25 years. They have killed workers in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and Latin America.

Given the worldwide distribution of its U. S. bases, the size of its military, the cost (over 54% of the government's budget) and the history of its wars and interventions, we have to conclude that electoral politics in the USA are the politics of imperialism.

Unlike past years, when almost half those eligible haven't bothered to vote, U. S. rulers are hoping that the right candidate, funded by record handouts and supported by a cheerleading media, will ramp up voting percentages, and lead enthusiastic voters into a "new" era of war, financial hardship, and political repression. In particular they need the support of youth and black and Latin workers to be the future soldiers of the U. S. empire.

Whether the Republicans keep control of the White House or whether the Democrats move back in with a Barack Obama victory, the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan will continue. The U.S. military footprint in the Middle East will grow. Misleading promises about "getting out of Iraq" aside, US troops, mercenaries, bases, and a mega-embassy will remain. As for the rest of the greater Middle East, from Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon, a day does not go by without more evidence of the relative decline of U.S. imperialism and increasing instability in this critical region due to sharper challenges from rival imperialists and others to U.S. dominance.

We already know the response of the next president: military escalation, with occasional interludes of negotiations. Many troops for these wars will come from immigrants promised a quick path to citizenship through military service. Next to them will be citizen youth facing bleak employment opportunities and fed false promises by military recruiters. But, have no doubt,

the Green Card army and the poverty draft will not be enough. Ultimately the shortfall in troop numbers won't be made up met through expensive mercenaries and contractors, and the gap will have to be filled through a draft, promoted as "national service," and sold as "volunteerism".

The existing and coming wars won't be cheap. The total U.S. military budget is already $1.1 trillion per year according to Prof. Chalmers Johnson, and will go up further. When it jumps up further, it will become harder for the U.S. government to find foreign lenders who are willing to fund their empire. That leaves the working class holding the bag, the ones the politicians will force to accept lower wages, reduced benefits, and cutbacks in government services and public infrastructure.

This pamphlet is aimed at equipping us and winning our friends to argue aggressively **against** voting in this election. Our slogans are: Don't vote, read and distribute CHALLENGE; Don't vote, organize against racism and imperialist wars; Don't vote, organize against speed up and war contracts; Don't vote, fight for communism.

THE SITUATION FACING THE NEXT U.S. PRESIDENT

The next U.S. president will inherit a superpower in big trouble. It is in desperate need to mobilize its population for support of wider wars, fascism and reduced government services. On one hand it still has military bases in over 100 countries, a military budget greater than the combined military budgets of all other countries in the world, with military invasions and occupations, slick corporate media, support of repressive regimes, enormous economic and financial power, hundreds of high powered think tanks and study centers, satellite surveillance of every spot on the planet, and computerized eavesdropping on millions of daily phone calls and emails. But, on the other hand, *the empire of U.S. capitalist is less able to maintain loyalty of once compliant regimes and hold off rival capitalist powers. The result is that it is slowly losing control of the world's resources, especially oil, and their enormous profits.*

As the Iraq and Afghanistan wars bleed the U.S. military and economy dry and expose the government's political and financial weaknesses, the enormous cost of these rich man's wars is being paid for by workers, soldiers, the unemployed, and students, most heavily by black and latin workers and youth, who are at the cutting edge of the attack on all workers. The wars' costs can be measured in blood. The costs can also be measured in cutbacks of living standards, public health, education, transit, student financial aid, as well as countless other public services.

As a growing number of people recognize the U.S. government's many lies about Iraq, especially their claims of protecting the American public from Islamic terrorism, the country's corporate rulers are desperate to persuade the public to willingly make greater sacrifices for their empire. That is why they have spent unprecedented amounts of money and publicity on the current presidential campaign. They are trying to win the American public to their military agenda, with some success through the Obama campaign's appeal to youth and black and latin workers. Caught up in the excitement of his campaign, these young voters hope that the 2008 election will somehow transform the United States into a peaceful, non-racist, and prosperous country. They do not yet realize that the opposite – war and more racist cutbacks -- is in store for them. Since the Democratic and Republican parties are both creatures of corporate capitalism at every level of government, from City Hall to the White House and Congress, no election will end the U.S.

empire or make the other major changes in the U.S. capitalist system these voters hope for.

This pamphlet describes the political, economic, and military crises fueling the frenzy of this election. Also, it shows how the election scam works and how the election is being used to win support for wider wars, racism, downsizing, and police surveillance. The final section of the pamphlet outlines how, in contrast to elections, a working class movement that fights to overthrow capitalism and its inherent need for war and foreign conquests to maximize corporate profits is the only possible strategy for ending imperialist wars and domestic repression.

What the future president is hearing from his advisers

The May / June 2008 special issue of the Council on Foreign Relation's magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, spells out the U.S. ruling class' concern over the rapid decline of their country as a superpower. It offers a detailed description of their decline and a range of policy changes to, at best, slow it down, including Michael Ross's telling article, "The Coming Oil Wars". Analyses of this type make it clear that when the next President of the United States assumes office in January 2009 – whether it is Barack Obama or John McCain – his foreign policy, military, and domestic economic advisors will provide detailed briefings on a host of immediate crises the incoming administration must manage. As *Foreign Affairs* spells out, they will carefully inventory the long-term challenges and conflicts posed by other countries confronting the US government. Both candidates are Washington insiders, well aware of the short- and long-term crises dumped in their lap by the Bush-Cheney administration.

The problems and attempts to fix them, mostly based on military force, have already been identified. The Council on Foreign Relations is also working behind the scenes with the Brookings Institution to stop the U.S. decline by making plans for Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel, and the rest of the Middle East. They report on their websites that they are now developing a joint "new" set of Middle East strategies for the incoming administration. Thus, in January 2009 both parties' candidates will already be

part of a foreign policy consensus that includes continued U. S. domination of Middle East oil, and preparations for future wars.

TABLE 1: The Candidates' Foreign Policy Advisors

Barack Obama	John McCain
• Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter National Security Advisor and author of the Carter Doctrine, that the US will use force to secure Persian Gulf oil • Anthony Lake, Clinton advisor responsible for US invasion of Haiti • General Merrill McPeak, active in US support for Indonesia's occupation of East Timor • Dennis Ross, Clinton and Bush II advisor on Israel-Palestine	• Max Boot, Council on Foreign Relations. • Henry Kissinger, Nixon's Secretary of State • Brent Scowcroft, Bush I foreign policy adviser • Colin Powell, Bush II Secretary of State

In fact, according to The Nation's military correspondent, Michael Klare, in the magazine's November 12, 2007 issue, most of this has already been completed:

> "Perhaps the most explicit expression of this elite consensus is an independent task force report, *National Security Consequences of U.S. Oil Dependency*, backed by many prominent Democrats and Republicans. It was released by the bipartisan Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), co-chaired by John Deutch, deputy secretary of defense in the Clinton Administration, and James Schlesinger, defense secretary in the Nixon and Ford administrations, in October 2006. The report warns of mounting perils to the safe flow of foreign oil. Concluding that the United States alone has the capacity to protect the global oil trade against the threat of violent obstruction, it argues the need for a strong US military presence in key producing areas and in the sea lanes that carry foreign oil to American shores."

It isn't that hard to figure out other parts of both candidates' future policies. For example, Barack Obama fired foreign policy advisor, Samantha Powers, in March 2008 for spilling the beans to the British press about Obama's plan to "get out of Iraq." She reported that this was a best case scenario for, at best, scaling down the US military occupation in Iraq – only after Obama conferred with the generals in the winter of 2009. More recently, Obama's "phased withdrawal" platform has morphed into a permanent colonial occupation. His top Iraq adviser Colin Kahl just wrote a report for the Center for a New American Security stating that "the U.S. should aim to transition to a sustainable over-watch posture (of perhaps 60,000–80,000 forces) by the end of 2010." (New York Sun, 6/4/08)

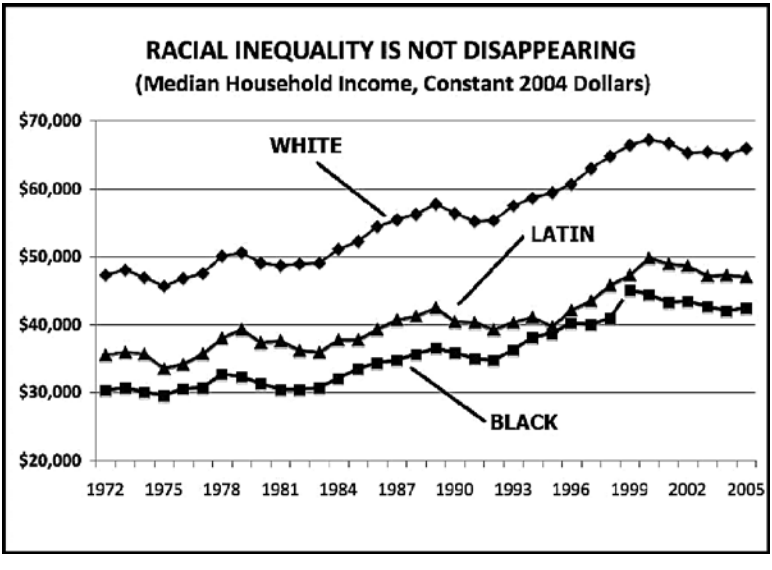
Pumping up patriotism

The new U.S. president already knows that his administration must dramatically pump up nationalistic and patriotic emotions among the U.S. public – especially young people – in order to win them to fight to reestablish U.S. global predominance. Obama was right when he said that patriotism means "willingness to sacrifice" (PBS news, 6/30/08), and sacrificing for the U. S. empire is what the U.S. rulers need. Obama cynically appeals to genuine anti-racist sentiment by masses of youth and workers to try to win us to defend the US rulers, who are really among the most racist and murderous in the world.

Just when the new presidential administration thinks it may have a breather to rebuild the US military, it will probably face more foreign crises, especially in and near oil-rich Persian Gulf. Some of these crises, especially Iran and Afghanistan, may spin further out of their control. This would then create openings for foreign competitors of the United States, especially Russia and China, both of whom are on an economic and political roll and are to working through regional front men.

Even though the candidates and the media are spending billions to convince a cynical American public that they should renew their faith in a U.S. government which lied through its teeth to justify the Iraq and Afghan Wars, the truly hard work of running a sagging, but fully armed, global empire is moving to its next phase. This is already *hinted* at by both

candidates, who talk about "hot spots" like Iran and Pakistan, and call for a bigger U. S. military. The grim realities are of a deep financial crisis and an extremely dangerous, extraordinarily unstable world constantly nipping at the heels of the US empire. Even if they are kept in the background during the long campaign, these crises will take center stage with a vengeance next January.



Racism and "national unity"

Along with patriotism and fear of terrorist attacks, U. S. politicians hope to use racism to win the loyalty of U. S. workers, students and soldiers. They build racist attitudes toward Arabs and Iranians, just as they did against Asians during the Vietnam War. In the 2000 campaign, McCain used racist terms to describe Vietnamese, saying "I hate g—ks. I will hate them as long as I live." (S. F. Chronicle 2/18/2000).

Senators McCain and Kennedy co-sponsored an "immigration reform"

reform bill, also endorsed by Obama, that would allow undocumented workers to get green cards after many years work only if they pay huge fines and taxes, and learn English. The current version includes the "Dream Act," that allows undocumented youth to get a green card if they serve in the military. These laws, which are also supported by Obama, are part of the U. S. capitalist strategy to win the loyalty of immigrant workers by convincing them they have a stake in the system.

McCain has practically nothing to say about racism, but Obama can't avoid the issue. He certainly isn't a campaigner against racism! When the 3 New York cops were acquitted of murdering Sean Bell, a young, unarmed black man they shot dozens of times, Obama could only say that this looked like "a possible case of excessive force." He said that "we respect the verdict that came down," and urged people not to resort to violent protest. (*Washington Post*, 4/25/08)

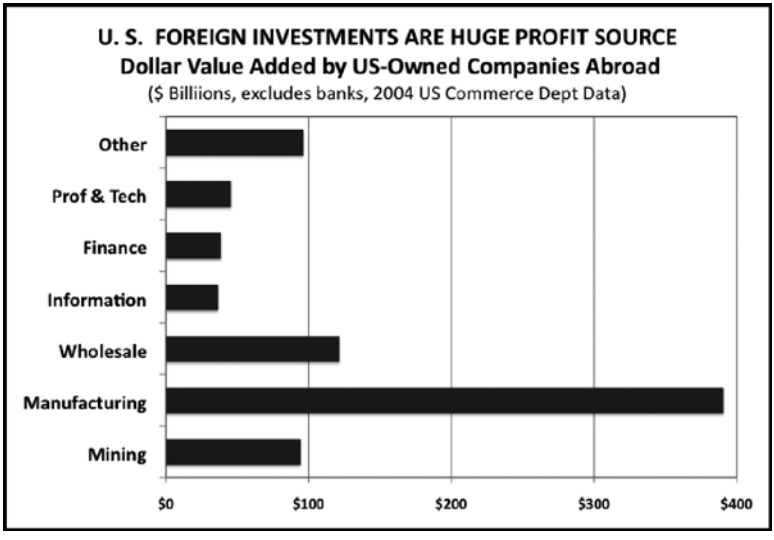
In his big speech in March 2008, he claimed that blacks should face "our own complicity in our condition," instead of blaming capitalists who profit from racism. He explained anger of black people against racism as older people's recollection of "humiliation and doubt and fear," left over from the 1950s and 1960s, and claimed that "so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow." Obama is clearly saying that racism is mainly in the past, at a time when racial inequalities in income have been changed little in many decades, and the US prison population has reached over 2.4 million, 70% of whom are black and latin. Obama claims that anger against racism is "divisive at a time when we need unity," unity against "the terror threat" and a "failing economy." In other words, militant struggle against racism will interfere with the needs of U. S. capitalists.

But <u>we</u> know that it will also strengthen our class and help us see other workers as allies and all bosses as enemies.

UNDER CAPITALISM, WARS ARE INEVITABLE

Capitalism's economic and political facts of life make wars, large and small, inevitable. Competition to maximize profits is hard-wired into the

capitalist economic system as are exploitation and racist super exploitation. It eventually trumps the capitalists' efforts at diplomacy, and, propelled by financial crises, it eventually results in foreign military conflicts bolstered through flag-waving and political crackdowns. In its efforts to dominate all its rivals and look out for the profits of U. S. corporations' investment in exploiting workers in manufacturing, agricultural products, banking, oil, and



minerals, movies and software, retailing, especially by control of the oil, the leaders of U. S. empire must convince a skeptical American public to support the government's efforts, especially an unavoidable military policy of *boots-on-the-sand above the oil fields*. Armies of public officials, pundits, news readers, academics, journalists, screen writers, and both evangelical and liberal preachers will be unleashed to try to bamboozle the American public into believing that more war brings peace, more belt-tightening brings prosperity, more patriotism and racism bring human understanding, and more repression and spying bring freedom. More racist cutbacks carried out by black and latin politicians, **along with their white counterparts**, will be packaged as non-racist inclusiveness.

Depending on the audience, and secondarily on the winner of the November

election, the public will be flooded with messages of a US fight-to-the-death against Islamic terrorism, accompanied by caricatures of swarthy villains in kafiyas (checkered scarves), or the "moral" need for the United States government to exert responsible leadership and provide "humanitarian support" to a dangerous, ungrateful, and often hostile world.

The 2008 election campaign, in fact, is a perfect preview of what is to come. The next administration and its operatives from the two major political parties will still make every effort to strip their communications clear of such truthful but totally taboo words as *oil, corporate profits, shipping lanes, wage and benefit cuts, layoffs and downsizing, regressive taxes and user fees, and the military draft*. Instead they will spew out high-minded declarations that the American public lives in a wonderful country whose freedoms and quality of life must be defended from foreign threats.

These claims will then be paired with totally hollow calls to support democratic aspirations around the world, protect human rights, prevent genocide, thwart despots and "evil doers", and offer a hand to the downtrodden, putting the best possible spin on escalating foreign wars built on racist stereotypes of Arabs and Iranians. Eventually, these open calls for sacrifice will replace George W. Bush's squandered opportunity, when, in 2001, he urged the American public to respond to 9-11 by going on a shopping spree instead of girding themselves for the further militarization of the United States, including the draft.

Overcoming the Vietnam and Iraq War Syndromes

The new president's high priority job assignment, to rev up patriotic passions in the United States, will face two enormous obstacles: the public is reeling from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and many still remember the Vietnam War, in which thousands of U.S. soldiers and sailors rebelled against the brass. Considering that two-thirds of the public is opposed to the Iraq War, that restarting the draft could politically ignite college campuses across the country, and that a draftee army could, **with anti-imperialist and communist leadership**, resurrect troop rebellions, this is a tall order for the new presidential administration. It can only hide forced military conscription behind "National Service" for so long, and when it takes this decisive step,

it is moving into uncharted territory. It will try even harder to twist the willingness of the working class to come together for what they perceive as a greater good into sacrifice for ruling class interests.

As for Iraq, like General Pretraeus's and Ambassador Crocker's testimony to Congress in April 2008, they will need to misrepresent a continued, long-term military occupation as an imminent victory based on projected troop departures repeatedly delayed by "unexpected" crises. When these tall tales no longer gain traction, they will then fall back on sloppily scripted requests from their puppet Iraqi government for continued US military support.

The peaceful alternatives which their supporters imagined they had voted for, such as shrinking the U.S.'s gargantuan military budget, reversing cuts in education and health care, shutting down foreign military bases, withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, and pulling the plug on repressive regimes propped up by the U.S. government, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, will be presented as the elusive pot of gold at the end of the War on Terrorism. *In truth, there is not going to be any return to business as usual. This scenario suggests that a principled anti-voting stand now will lead to greater rewards later.*

What the candidates already know, but obviously will not say during the presidential campaign, is that policies to voluntarily retrench the American empire would accelerate U.S. decline almost as quickly as an outright U.S. military defeat in Iraq. In either case, local forces in every corner of the world, both popular and elite, would rapidly fill the power vacuum left by any American exit. Many of them would succeed once they secured the support of an international patron, such as the Europeans, the Russian government, the Chinese government, or their regional proxies, especially the oil powers of Iran and Venezuela.

Disappointment Ahead

for those who believe in elections

This is why those millions who expect that current and future U.S. elections will finally elect political leaders to take over the reins in Washington and steer the government in peaceful, humanistic direction should brace themselves for disappointment. There is no politician or team of experts in

the wings who can finesse US foreign and domestic policy to simultaneously prop up a waning global empire while magically increasing public spending on domestic infrastructure and services, improving working conditions, and buoying up living standards. Such hopes, though understandable, run 180 degrees opposite from the bleak military, economic, and political realities facing the current administration and the ones which will follow. No amount of financial fine-tuning or diplomacy can side-step the monetary decline, intensified international competition, and desperate military responses that permeate the capitalist system and are revealed during capitalist crises, like the one now unfolding.

When it comes to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, there are no easy alternatives, now or in the future, to projecting more "boots on the ground" into these strategic areas, as well as to other countries in the Middle East, especially Iran. On one hand, the tactical options of saturation bombing, diplomacy, economic sanctions, puppet government, bribes, and contracted mercenaries have already failed. On the other hand, direct U.S. military invasions, such as Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and now Iraq and Afghanistan, cost a fortune, hollow out this country's infrastructure and services, demoralize and anger U.S. workers, youth and soldiers, alienate potential allies, and have a dismal record of producing permanent military victories.

Advisors debate the alternatives on the Iraq War

Last summer, a *New York Times* editorial (August 24, 2007) revealed what could be a secondary purpose of the 2008 election: resolving ruling class differences over the Iraq War. The paper recommended that the U.S. face up to its failure to subdue Iraq and get over it in order to move on to more critical business. By withdrawing, the Times wrote that the U.S. government would be able to rebuild its "battered armed forces" to become a "nation better positioned to deal with the relentless challenges of global leadership "-- that is, the challenges of being the biggest imperialist on the planet. A recent article in *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2007) also repeats this theme. It says that the U.S. must face up to its failure in Iraq and rebuild its corps of generals, who meekly backed down when the former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, refused to allocate sufficient troops to occupy

Iraq. The article also called for the country to get rid of its bad political leadership and incompetent political appointees, reform the press, who "helped sell the war," and improve inter-agency cooperation and the U.S. "capacity for nation building and counterinsurgency."

Withdrawing (most) U.S. troops from Iraq, redeploying them to nearby bases, and rebuilding the U.S. military for future wars represents one side of the elite policy debate on how to deal with the U.S. defeat. Another side claims that there is no alternative but to continue to fight at current levels for however long it takes to win. A third view compromises between the two. It calls for a reduction of U.S. troops to a level the U.S. can sustain, claiming it a withdrawal from the war, but, in fact, staying indefinitely to fight Islamic opponents and protect critical US installations, such as permanent military bases and the super-sized US embassy complex under construction in Baghdad.

McCain has campaigned on the second alternative, while Obama advocates the compromise position: a partial withdrawal which they misrepresent as ending the Iraq War. No major candidates have articulated the first position, usually associated with retired General William E. Odom, a complete U. S. exit from Iraq. During the campaign only two minor presidential candidates, Ron Paul on the Republican side and Dennis Kucinich on the Democratic

side, espoused the total withdrawal position. Past history shows, however, that winning presidential candidates seldom do what they promise or what their voters hope they will pursue because the president acts in the interests of the empire, not the voters.

In fact, the U.S. empire has no good choices regarding Iraq. It needs to get most of its troops out of Iraq to rebuild its military, but it can't risk the domino effect of an Iraq defeat leading to the complete loss of the entire Persian Gulf for US imperialism. It has to stay to control the oil supply, oil profits, and oil its competitors need, especially China and Europe. And, it must also prevent Iran, which may soon have nuclear weapons, from dominating the Persian Gulf and greater Middle East, perhaps even conquering Saudi Arabia, with its huge oil supplies.

Both candidates are hawks

The candidates are well aware of these realities, and of other enormous obstacles to overcome to keep the U.S. empire on top. That is why they all advocate a bigger U.S. military, and, as shown in Table 2, are equally hawkish on other major military options. They recognize that the Bush administration has done a terrible job in defending U.S. capitalism. It has antagonized allies, become notorious world-wide for torture and arbitrary detention, failed to mobilize the U.S. public for war, and proved to be amazingly incompetent in trying to rule Iraq. The Democrats have agreed with the Bush Administration on a number of points, such as the centrality of the War on (Islamic) Terrorism, as well as voting for the war, huge military budgets, the Patriot Act, military tribunals, and legalizing previous warrantless wiretaps. When it comes to the other pillars of US policy in the Middle East, the Afghan War, the need to control Pakistan, the threat of Iran, and support for repressive, but pro-US governments in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Israel, Turkey, and Egypt, the Democrats fully agree with the Bush Administration. Complete US withdrawal means an Iranian victory.

TABLE 2: How The Candidates Compare On Import Issues Of War		
Issue	**Obama**	**McCain**
Iraq	Fund war, but if possible, scale back to redeploy elsewhere in Middle East	Maintain troop levels and build-up elsewhere in the Middle East
Size of Military	Expand by 100,000 troops	Expand by 150,000 troops
War on Terrorism	Main focus of US foreign policy	Main focus of US foreign policy
Afghanistan	Escalate	Escalate
Israel and Palestine	Continue existing policies of massive, unconditional military aid	Continue existing policies of massive, unconditional military aid
Pentagon Budgets	Voted for all	Voted for all
Iran	Major threat – all options on the table	Major threat – all options on the table
Saudi Arabia, other Gulf Monarchies	Full support, while chiding on human rights	Full support, while chiding on human rights
Military Draft	Begin program of national service	Expand Americorp
US Bases in ME	Keep them all.	Keep them all.
Turkey and PKK	Small attacks into Iraq OK	Small attack into Iraq OK

Rise of rival powers

How the fortunes of the United States have changed since WWII, when it emerged as a victor, with about half of the world's industrial production and faced only one major adversary, the other big military winner, the Soviet

Union! But, this bi-polar world ended in 1989-91, when the Soviet Union broke apart, voluntarily retrenched its empire, retreated from the Cold War, and made a full transformation from state to market capitalism. This upheaval ushered in a brief unipolar era when the United States became the world's sole super-power and when many liberals expected a domestic "peace dividend" to revive liberal social programs. Instead the Clinton Administration pursued the current arms build-up, now entering its 12th year.

This unipolar moment, however, quickly sputtered out when the USA discovered it was part of a multi-polar world in which other powers were quickly rising and competing with the United States. Since 2000 this trend has sharply increased, with the United States now facing a resurgent Russia, rapidly growing China, and a maturing and consolidating European Union. While the latter could be a potential ally of the United States, most Western European countries have chosen a path of gradual separation from the United States and, are strengthening their ties to Russia and China. This, in fact, is one of the major reasons they have been reluctant to send military reinforcements or financial aid to bail out the United States from its disastrous invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The end of unchallenged U.S. dominance has meant that many regional powers, such as Iran and Venezuela, which were once controlled by the United States government, have become brazen in their defiance. Furthermore, their defiance has propped up their leaders and earned these countries support from Russia and China. It has also attracted support from the public of many countries impressed by Venezuela's Chavez and Iran's Ahmadinejad when they stand up to the United States, whether by tough words or low level actions, such as oil and financial deals.

In short, the new president, whose campaign mode did not allow him to be candid, must now persuade the American public that the US is facing an Islamic - Russian - Chinese - Iranian - Venezuelan axis, with many countries and nationalist movements, such as India, waiting in the wings to join them. At present the latter are only testing the water, but as the power and influence of the United States continues to decline, they will eventually join the anti-US axis unless the US takes pre-emptive military actions against them. Such an attack, however, comes with great risk. If it fails, which is likely, it would accelerate, not reverse, the decline of the U.S. empire. The anti-U.S. axis would then grow even faster.

TABLE 3: The Rise Of Other Imperialist Powers Directly Competing With The United States

1) The growth of China as an economic, political, and eventually a military power. While the Chinese claim they will have a peaceful rise as a world power, China is emerging on all fronts as the leading competitor of the United States. China's rise will have an enormous impact on the economy of the United States since it has so many successes in Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Its military is also rapidly expanding its size and technical capabilities. Furthermore, it is only years away from competing with the US on important military fronts, such as establishing a blue water navy and capacity for space wars.

2) The resurgence of Russia. After a 15 year hiatus, Russia has paid off all of it loans to Western banks and has established itself as a major player on the world's stage, exporting oil and natural gas, and controlling pipelines to the European Union. Russia has made it clear that it will match any US military or diplomatic escalation in kind, and with is military history and enormous financial reserves this is a credible threat. Because it is the world's second largest oil and gas exporter, its financial reserves are soaring, now approaching $500 billion. This money is now being used for domestic and foreign investments.

3) The European Union represents an economy and population larger than the United States that is dependent on Russia for a third of its energy needs. Its key countries are reluctant to further support the United States in either Afghanistan or Iraq. Whether the EU will seriously come to U.S. aid for the other crises which have already begun and will continue to unfold between 2009 to 2013, such as in Iran, remains to be seen. The real test, however, will come when the European Union is forced to choose sides between the US on one side and the China-Russia axis on the other.

Peak oil

The United States, like all other countries, has an economy and technology which is based on oil and gas for energy, transportation, and thousands of irreplaceable industrial products, such as textiles and fertilizers. There is no comparable energy and chemical source available to the United States or any other country for the foreseeable future to replace oil. This is why the U.S. government has no choice but to take great risks, in particular to use its trillion dollar per year military to control, *as long as possible*, the planet's remaining petroleum resources, plus key energy access routes. Whoever controls these choke points, such as the 50 mile wide Straits of Hormuz sandwiched between Iran and the United Arab Emirates, has extraordinary leverage over competing powers!

Furthermore, the US was once the world's largest petroleum producer, but now imports a large portion of its oil and gas, largely from Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia. Even though the Middle East, primarily the Persian Gulf, has two-thirds of the world's remaining recoverable oil reserves, at present it is not yet a major US supplier, but will become so over the next several decades. To buttress these points, the new administration will acknowledge the conclusion of the Bush Administration's 2001 *National Energy Policy report*. This report summarized the deteriorating oil situation of the United States in the frankest of terms:

> Our projected growing dependence on oil imports is a serious long-term challenge. US economic security and that of our trading partners will remain closely tied to global oil market developments…. Despite progress in diversifying our oil supplies over the past two decades, the U.S. and global economies remain vulnerable to a major disruption of oil supplies. --*National Energy Policy Report*, 2001, p. 1 - 13

This report is clear that as overall US demand for oil and gas increases, and suppliers from the Western Hemisphere are no longer capable of maintaining their production levels, the US will have no choice but to import ever increasing amounts of oil and gas from the Middle East. Despite the enormous financial costs, environmental degradation, and political blowback from this course of action, the post-petroleum era is, at best, many decades off. It is not a viable option for the current administration, the next one, or

for many subsequent ones. At best it will take hundreds of billions of dollars in research and investments over many decades to make the transition from oil and gas to a now imaginary high technology, sustainable, post-petroleum era. Even then the remaining oil and gas, as well as alternative fuels and technologies, will be unbelievably profitable and a source of continued military conflict. Economic competition between corporations and their military backers for these profits will not stop with the decline of oil, it will simply move on to newer resource wars over alternative fuels and their associated geographies. Capitalism is based on competition for maximum profits and, until capitalism is destroyed and replaced by a communist system based on production to meet the needs of the worlds' workers, the capitalists will compete for oil profits or profits from any other source of energy.

The U.S. not only needs these Middle East oil profits to sustain its own economy and to fortify the bottom line of major US corporations, but oil plays an important strategic military role, as well. All modern militaries are dependent on oil to fight wars and have been so since World War I. Any world power with a credible military capacity and threat, such as the United States, needs oil for its military, which is the world's largest petroleum consumer. It, therefore, needs to control oil supply and transportation routes for its own sake, and as a strategic weapon against its competitors and adversaries. If the US were again able to choke their enemies' armies by denying them oil, as it did against the Japanese and German armies and navies in World War II, then the United States could maintain its dominant position in the world system for a longer time.

One the other hand, if the rival imperialists were able to choke the US Armed Forces by denying them the same oil…There's a scenario that US imperialists would be willing to massacre millions upon millions of working class lives to prevent. In "Rising Powers Shrinking Planets" Michael Klare points out how vital oil has become to imperialist armies. "During World War 2, the American military consumed one gallon of petroleum per soldier per day; during the first Gulf War of 1990-91, the rate rose to four gallons per soldier per day; in the Bush administration's war in Iraq and Afghanistan, it leapt to sixteen gallons per soldier per day." On the one hand, the US imperialists will never walk away from controlling such a vital raw material; on the other hand, rival imperialist powers will never peacefully cede monopoly control of it to the US.

All candidates are supported by big business

The irreplaceable financial importance of Middle Eastern oil also explains why big business, especially Wall Street, as shown in Table 4, has been so generous in financing the political campaigns of Barack Obama, former candidate Hillary Clinton, and John McCain. For them the calculation could not be more straightforward. *"He who pays the (Pied) Piper, calls the tune."* Since Obama has, so far, been the most successful candidate to draw youth into the campaign, he has become their Pied Piper.

TABLE 4: Top Three Big Business Contributors To Obama, Former Candidate Clinton, and McCain

Barack Obama	Hillary Clinton	John McCain
Goldman Sachs (Wall Street's top political power broker. Home of current and former Treasury Secretaries)	Goldman Sachs (Wall Street's top political power broker. Home of current and former Treasury Secretaries)	Citigroup (Largest US and world bank. Saudi's main shareholder)
UBS (world's largest wealth manager, largely owned by Saudi royal family)	Citigroup (Largest US and world bank. Saudi's main shareholder)	Bank Rome (lobbyists for Shell Oil and Chiquita Banana)
J.P. Morgan Chase (Rockefeller bank, closely tied to Exxon-Mobil)	Morgan Stanley (Wall Street bank deeply invested in Middle East)	Greenberg Traurig (Alcoa's law firm)

Domestic crises

Financial crises mean that the capitalist class will try to force the working class to pay more -- through increased taxes and fees combined with reduced wages, benefits, and services -- for the US government to undertake its escalating energy wars. For example, President Bush's April 2008 request for an additional $108 billion to wage the Iraq War is on top of

his other, massive budget proposals whose purpose is to secure oil supplies, supply routes, and profits, much less make the critical, long-term domestic investments necessary for a well-oiled war machine. Schools to produce officers, skilled machinists, and the soldiers-of-the-future who can operate in a high tech battle field require small classes and hands-on technology, none of which can be bought on the cheap. Over-crowded classrooms and 10-year-old computers dating back to the previous century will not cut it. Furthermore, communications and transportation, for both people and goods, must be top notch, not mediocre when compared to both Europe and to Asia, for the U.S. to hold on to its political, economic, and military power as long as possible. Therefore, taxes and fees on workers will go up. This will be a racist attack, hurting the lowest paid black and Latin workers the most and at the same time hurting all workers and professionals. The fight against racism is therefore key to the fight for the interests of all workers. Taxes for the rich will go up as well, part of paying for their empire.

Furthermore, to expand the total military budget into the indefinite future, now in its 12th year of escalation, the United States will require a host of corresponding domestic industrial improvements. Old industries related to war production must be revived and retooled, while new industries must be established, especially in the low-wage, non-union south and southwest of the United States. This also means that new segments of the population, especially low paid Black and Latino workers, must be trained and recruited into these industries, similar to their role in the American war industries of World War II. Workers in the traditional unionized plants will see their standard of living attacked as the "heritage" plants follow the lead of the subcontractors. These exploited workers can, however, become open to revolutionary alternatives despite the best efforts of the new presidential administration to indoctrinate them to politically support the U.S. war machine.

The financial constraints on these ambitious plans result from an entangled list of economic failures which the US federal government and local governments are not capable of reversing – except through necessary but counterproductive and highly unpopular cutbacks in essential services, public infrastructure, salaries, benefits, and working conditions. These underlying failures stem from the basic contradictions of the capitalist economic system itself. No band-aids, such as the Bush administration's token "stimulus" tax rebates or massive bail-outs of commercial and investment banks, will change the following fundamental trends:

Massive and growing public indebtedness

At the Federal level debt is increasing by $550 billion per year and now totals $9 trillion, 44 percent of which is owed to anxious foreign investors. Most of this borrowing is required to pay for the annual trillion dollar military expenses of the United States, including the Iraq and Afghan Wars. This means that these two ongoing wars are being funded by foreign buyers of Federal debt instruments, such as Treasury bonds. This situation is almost a perfect bookend to the U.S. Revolutionary War in 1776, which was the only other U.S. war funded by foreign lenders, in that case France. From then until now, all other US wars were financed through domestic borrowing. But, the foreign lenders are already slowly moving their existing and new investments away from the rapidly depreciating dollar, a trend which can only be stemmed by increasing their interest rates. Instead, they are buying assets, commodities, and other currencies.

The once mighty US dollar, the reserve currency of the world, is rapidly losing its value because of the collapse of the debt subprime crisis and huge debt to foreign lenders. One result is much higher gas prices. Another is that many foreign investors are reducing their holdings in dollars and many savvy US investors are gradually shifting their cash, stocks, and bonds to other currencies, especially Euros. How long foreign capitalists will be willing to bankroll U.S. debts is anybody's guess.

Financial and deepening economic crisis

The subprime mortgage crisis has now ballooned into one of the most serious economic downturns in recent history. Major U.S. banks have had to write off hundreds of billions in losses. The Federal Reserve has in turn continued to put money into the financial markets in order to prop up the biggest banks, and now, prevent another collapse like that which almost took place at Bear Stearns. Even this infusion of hundreds of billions of dollars has not stabilized these markets. Commercial banks are now far less willing to finance business expansion; nor are lenders offering the easy credit of the past. And just when the working class was already being hit by foreclosures, layoffs, and the inability to borrow against skidding home values, soaring

gas and food prices have taken a tremendous toll, causing working people to cutback on anything but essential purchases. This, along with the overproduction of manufactured goods that always results from a competitive unplanned system of production, is beginning to affect the broader economy in a bigger way. This recession could very well be prolonged, resulting in even more desperate moves by a U.S. ruling class which must and will shed rivers of workers' blood to maintain its declining power.

THE GROWTH OF FASCISM

The economic attacks on the working class mentioned above are an important part of the increasing fascism in the U.S. workplace. There are other signs elsewhere. Even before 9/11, the U.S. government passed several laws in the mid-1990s which laid the groundwork for legalized fascism. In

1999 and 2000, the bipartisan Hart-Rudman Commission predicted a Pearl Harbor-type attack on U.S. soil in the near future, and outlined the steps needed to mobilize the population for war after such an attack. Already on the drawing board before 9/11, the U.S.A. Patriot Act and Homeland Security were ruthlessly put into place immediately thereafter. Since then, there have been a flood of legal changes which have further advanced U.S. fascism, including increased political spying, "terrorism" investigations netting large numbers of falsely accused Arab and Muslim workers, the institutionalization of secret courts and secret evidence, terrorizing of immigrant workers through mass raids and deportations, and the sanctioning of most of these actions by the U.S. court system. The purpose of these laws, and the political hysteria that has led to their passage, is to create a climate of fear among broad sectors of the U.S. population, and to mobilize workers to fight the "war on terror", shorthand for convincing them to fight and die in imperialist wars to stop their rivals from overtaking U.S. rulers' position. The main rulers are also using their legal system to discipline other capitalists who do not tow the line of the biggest thieves (Bear Stearns is one example), and to make examples of others (meat company bosses in Iowa charged with hiring undocumented immigrant workers).

What is to be done?

Although the U.S. still has the world's most powerful empire, it is just the current successor to the previous European colonial and Soviet capitalist empires, all of which produced war, racism, death, and oppression. Then and now the economic laws of capitalism inevitably produce competition, imperialist expansion and domination, and war. Among the major imperialist countries, economic rivalries systematically descend into war, accompanied by repression, jail, patriotic fervor, racism toward foreigners and domestic minorities, reduced living standards, and massive increases in the military. Capitalism, by its very nature, leads to this economic competition, which in turn leads to racism, war and to fascism. Only by eliminating capitalism, can we eliminate its war, racism, and repression. For this daunting task there are no silver bullets, but there are historical models.

Since October 1917, when Russian workers lead a revolution and took power during WWI, the world's capitalists have been fully aware of the anti-capitalist genie emerging from the bottle of war during their deep crises. This is when war and fascism emerge from the crevices of capitalism and when workers, students, and soldiers are more open to revolutionary ideas when they are presented to them carefully over time. That is why the U.S. rulers, like rulers everywhere, are now pushing patriotism, nationalism, and racism so hard. They know the potential political risks of wider wars.

That is also why they are spending so much on the election, trying to win our loyalty to leaders like Barack Obama. When other politicians, like Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who is laying off city workers to hire more cops, calls for ICE to stop its immigration raids, he is not really on our side. He wants immigrants to stay in the U.S. as super-exploited, low paid patriotic workers, who will willingly send their sons and their daughters off to foreign wars.

Fighting back against imperialist wars and repression is a good thing since these struggles build unity for even more important battles. The only real solution, the lesson to be brought to these battles, is to get rid of the economic system of imperialism that constantly breeds war, racism and fascism. Not treating the causes, but only the symptoms, such as supporting presidential candidates who claim to be anti-war, does <u>not</u> advance these goals. It means being caught up in a scheme to legitimate imperialism and the slide into fascism. Instead we need to organize and join a worker, student, and G.I. movement to eliminate imperialism and capitalism and replace it with communism, a classless society without the rich and their imperial system. We need a system where we produce to meet the needs of the world's workers, not the racist war makers' profits, a system with no exploitation, profits, racism or imperialist wars.

We need to learn from the tremendous achievements and the errors of past revolutions to fight directly for communism and not the "halfway house" of socialism, which failed to eliminate the wage system and its inequality, and therefore led back to capitalism.

As part of the fight against war and fascism, we call on workers, students, and soldiers to join with the Progressive Labor Party in some or all of the following ways:

1. On Campus: Students can fight military recruitment and training on their campuses. College students can expose and fight against imperialist policy planning, "national security" training of police and CIA on their campuses, and military research.

Students can also fight against the racist education budget cuts that result from war spending and prison construction so everyone can understand what imperialism is already costing them. They can build an alliance with workers and soldiers.

2. Fighting Racism: Students, workers, and G.I.'s must fight to unite and defeat all forms of racism in their ranks, fighting increasing racist police attacks, anti-immigrant groups, and bad and unequal education. We also need to oppose laws like the "Dream Act" that entice immigrants to join the military by promising them legal residence. We need to fight the lie that immigrants, rather than the bosses, cause unemployment.

3. The Work Place: Industrial workers should fight for anti-imperialist politics in their unions and non-union shop floor struggles. Workers have a strategic position in the economy that gives them much more power than students. Workers in defense and transportation industries can organize to fight against speed up, unsafe conditions, uniting non-union and union workers and building fighting revolutionary groups on the job. They can refuse to transport weapons in other countries, as some US longshoremen did during the Vietnam War and their British counterparts did for Iraq.

4. The Military: G.I.'s and military families should organize to prevent U.S. troop deployments, refuse to commit atrocities, resist the brass, and fight racism, to prepare for a future in which troops can turn the guns around against the imperialists, as happened again and again during the Vietnam War.

5. Progressive Labor Party: Most importantly, students, workers, and G.I.'s should join the Progressive Labor Party and fight to end the misery and slaughter of capitalism with working class revolution, and fighting for communism.

6. Expand the readership of CHALLENGE. During this period of intense ruling class propaganda millions of workers are open to political discussion,

By aiming to double our sales and building the fight for communism, we'll take advantage of it. **CHALLENGE networks can become the basis for a much larger revolutionary Party in factories, barracks and schools.**

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

★ Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism -- wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead:" capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.

★ Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism -- the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

★ Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

★ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

★ Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

★ Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.

Conclusions

The most important things that anti-racists, anti-imperialists, and communists can do during and after this election campaign is to reach out to the working class, especially industrial workers and soldiers, with the critical ideas of this pamphlet:

First, we are now entering another historical period of economic crisis, war, and fascism, all stemming from the internal operations and contradictions of capitalism.

Second, historically, each of these deep crises gave rise to powerful historical forces, which after WW I gave birth to the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union, and after WW II allowed the revolution in China. But, revolutions won't happen automatically.Without organizing a mass international communist party, with deep roots among workers, soldiers and students, we'll face another hellish capitalist future.

Third, we are now on the verge of a third such period. We must conduct an intense but long range struggle to turn the unfolding imperialist wars into wars for workers power and communism.

Please send inquiries, comments, and updates on this election pamphlet to the:

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